

Motorcycle Helmet Usage in Illinois

June 2003 Observational Survey Results

Survey Design

The recent motorcycle helmet survey was a statistical (multi-stage random) observational survey conducted statewide during June 2003 on both high volume state highways and low volume local roads and residential streets. The survey design was based on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's requirements and had two characteristics.

1. The survey was conducted between 7:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. when the light was adequate for observation.
2. The survey sites included all interstate highways and freeways and a random sample of residential streets within selected areas.

There were 722 operators and passengers of motorcycles observed at 258 locations statewide. The survey provided a statistically representative sample of the state as a whole. For more information on survey design, refer to the original report entitled "Design of the New Safety Belt Usage Survey in Illinois", Division of Traffic Safety, Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), January 1994.

Summary of Findings

Results of the motorcycle survey conducted at 258 sites in June 2003 are summarized in Table 1. The first data column indicates the total number of motorcycle operators and passengers observed. Column 2 presents usage rates per 100 motorcycle riders. The categories listed on the left side of the table indicate the various regions of the state where the survey was conducted (with the number of survey sites in each region in parenthesis), road types, time of day the survey was conducted, and a breakdown of weekdays and weekends. A total

Table 1		
Motorcycle Helmet Usage Rates in Illinois		
(JUNE 2003)		
	Total Observed	Actual Usage Rate
	(1)	(2)
Statewide (258)	722	35.9%
Regions		
City of Chicago (46)	49	24.5%
Cook County (40)	58	31.0%
Collar Counties (118)	474	30.8%
Downstate (54)	141	58.9%
Road Type		
Residential (190)	306	33.0%
U.S./Illinois Highways (40)	85	48.2%
Interstate Highways (28)	331	35.3%
Time of Day		
Morning Rush Hours (55)	86	48.8%
Noon Rush Hours (45)	115	30.4%
Evening Rush Hours (23)	98	26.5%
Non-Rush Hours (135)	423	36.9%
Day of Week		
Weekends (115)	524	32.4%
Weekdays (143)	198	44.9%

of 722 motorcycle riders were observed. Of those, 35.9 percent were wearing helmets. The Downstate Counties (Champaign, Macon, Montgomery, Peoria, Rock Island, and St.Clair) had the highest usage rate of 58.9 percent. Cook County and the Collar Counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will) had usage rates of 31.0 percent and 30.8 percent respectively, while the City of Chicago had a usage rate of 24.5 percent.

There were slight differences among the different road types' usage rates. U.S. and Illinois marked highways had the highest usage rate of 48.2 percent. Interstate highways had the a usage rate of 35.3 percent and residential roads had a usage rate of 33.0 percent. The morning rush hours (7:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.) had the highest usage rate of 48.8 percent. The second highest usage rate was during non-rush hours at 36.9 percent, while noon rush hours (11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.) had a usage rate of 30.4 percent. The evening rush hours (4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.) had the lowest usage rate of 26.5 percent.

There was quite a difference in the usage rates on weekdays verses weekends. On the weekdays motorcyclists used helmets 32.4 percent of the time, while motorcyclists on the weekends had a helmet usage rate of 44.9 percent.

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